

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 18, 2001 LB 598

by the department, not the placement, but as the plan that's developed by the department, then any party to the court action and the placement by the Department of Human...Health and Human Services, may appeal that to a review panel. Those are the parts of law that currently exist. The earlier amendment, we attempted to amend that in, take this whole section of review and put it in the child welfare section. Feedback I was getting was that it made more sense to just amend the OJS section of law, which a couple of years ago Senator Suttle chaired a committee with people across the state, working on the changes to the juvenile code because of the merger. So the bill essentially sets up the same process, same process for out-of-home placements, for all out-of-home placements in the department. Now let me take you back to what...how we got here. When I first was elected to the county board, and prior to being elected to the county board when I sat in on meetings from time to time on different issues, the counties had the welfare department. There were a lot of problems when counties had the welfare department. There were some efficiencies that couldn't be accomplished. There were some things that weren't happening. And as the day goes on here, I'll talk about some of those things. But the Legislature, at the end of the Thone administration, made the decision that the state should take over public assistance functions. And the Kerrey administration was the implementation group to put that in place. And so that was done in 1984. When the department was taken over, there were misunderstandings, there were disputes over who paid for what, what paid for what. Probably the general feeling at the time was that they weren't adequately funded, first of all because the clarity of what they were taking over, and second because in some cases the counties hadn't provided a very high level of services to start with. And if the equities were going to be placed across the state and we didn't have things such as highway welfare, where we all, in our counties, just gassed up the car of the person who broke down in their county and sent them on the road and caused the problem for some other county to pick up some of those services that needed to happen. But along during the eighties, the dispute was, should the courts continue to be able to make these out-of-home placements that the state now had to pay for, and...or should that be purely an agency administrative decision. In 1998...in 1988, there was a Supreme